



UNITED STATES SENATE  
**REPUBLICAN  
POLICY COMMITTEE**

**Larry E. Craig, Chairman**  
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November 5, 1997

## **S. 10, the Juvenile Offender Act**

The facts are gruesome (see the back of this page for some of them), so it is no wonder that reducing juvenile crime is a top priority for Republicans. A bill to address the problem was one of the top ten priorities when this Congress opened, and that bill, [S. 10](#), has been reported from the Judiciary Committee and is now pending on the Senate Calendar for action next year.

There are **three key goals** behind this bill:

- Encouraging policies to ensure that young people are held accountable for their criminal or delinquent acts.
- Helping ensure that juveniles who commit serious, adult crimes (such as murder and rape) are punished as adults.
- Reforming federal aid to state and local youth crime programs by modifying federal mandates that, in many instances, have stifled innovative state efforts to address violent youth crime. (The bill will provide additional federal resources to the states and local governments to improve programs for the prosecution, incarceration, and treatment of juvenile criminals; for innovative and effective prevention efforts; and for the maintenance, improvement, and distribution of juvenile criminal records, while at the same time streamlining and coordinating many federal efforts.)

There are **three essential components** to the bill:

- Addressing the increasing national problem of interstate gangs which frequently recruit juveniles. (The bill beefs up the federal anti-gang statute by permitting federal prosecution of gang criminals who commit two or more gang-related crimes such as drug dealing, witness intimidation, extortion, drug money laundering, and drive-by shooting. Convictions will result in a 10-year mandatory minimum penalty and the forfeiture of gang-related assets.)

- Reauthorizing, reforming, and streamlining the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974 to empower states to experiment and make progressive reforms that get tough on the worst juvenile criminals while deterring other young people from getting involved in crime, gangs, and drugs. (The bill creates a block grant program that will provide incentives for the states to enactment reforms, e.g. accountability-based juvenile justice systems.) This component is premised on the idea that Washington does not "know best."
- Reforming procedures for handling the few cases each year in which a juvenile is prosecuted for a federal crime in federal court.

## **Some of the Gruesome Facts on Juvenile Crime**

A murder is reported to the police every 21 minutes, a forcible rape every 5 minutes, a robbery every 48 seconds and an aggravated (serious) assault every 28 seconds. A motor vehicle theft is reported to the police every 20 seconds, a burglary every 11 seconds and a larceny-theft every 4 seconds. Many of these offenses are being committed by juveniles.

The past decade has witnessed a dramatic increase in both the number and seriousness of the crimes committed by juveniles. Juveniles today commit murder, rape, robbery, and drug trafficking offenses at a rate unimagined when the juvenile justice system was adopted. There was a 50-percent increase in the rate of juvenile arrests for violent crimes between 1988 and 1994. Juvenile courts handled 98 percent more cases in 1994 than in 1985 that involved violent crimes (homicide, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault).

The number of juveniles committing homicide increased nearly threefold from 1984 to 1994, with more than 2,800 juveniles committing homicide in 1994. The number of 12- to 14-year-old homicide offenders rose 174 percent from 1984-94. From 1980 through 1994 there have been more than 26,000 known juvenile homicide offenders. From 1980 through 1994, juveniles killed 27,000 people. More than 2,300 people were killed by juveniles in 1994 alone, which was more than 2.5 times the number in 1984.

Juveniles commit other serious crimes. From 1985 to 1994, 50 percent of the increase in robberies is attributable to juveniles. Nearly one-third of all persons arrested in 1994 for robbery were below the age of 18. Juveniles accounted for 55 percent of all arrests in arson-related cases and 36 percent of burglaries. In the decade preceding 1994, juveniles were responsible for 48 percent of the increase in forcible rapes.

Juvenile criminal gang activity also has seen a considerable increase. For example, the Los Angeles District Attorney's Office estimated that in May 1992 there were 1,000 gangs with 150,000 members in Los Angeles County and that gangs had been responsible for

virtually all of the growth in the number of homicides since 1984. In Chicago in 1995, 212 of the 827 murders (26 percent) were attributed to street gangs.

To be sure, juvenile murder arrests declined 14 percent from 1994 to 1995, and the number of juvenile arrests for murder in 1995 was 9 percent below the level in 1991. However, that number was 90 percent above the number of juvenile murder arrests in 1986. Moreover, juvenile arrests from property crimes did not change from 1991 to 1995, and the decline in juvenile burglary arrests (11 percent) and motor vehicle theft arrests (17 percent) were offset by the 6-percent increase in juvenile arrests for larceny-theft, the highest volume offense category for juveniles. Juveniles were involved in 13 percent of all drug arrests in 1995, a 138-percent increase since 1991. Recent figures therefore do not supply a sound basis for believing that juvenile crime has peaked.

Many observers believe that we have not yet seen an end to the growth in violent juvenile crime. Juvenile arrests for murder are projected to increase 145 percent from 1992 to 2010; aggravated assault rates would increase 129 percent. The Department of Justice predicted that, if current trends continue as they have over the past 10 years, juvenile arrests for violent crime will more than double by the year 2010.

**[Note: All information in this paper was taken from [Senate Rept. No. 105-108](#), pp. 61-67.]**